The Seed Sower.

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A Sprig of Holly.

So gracious is the time, we say,
When Christmas comes with gifts of cheer!
More beautiful it is than May,
When flowers bloom and birds appear.
It is the gladness of the soul
Assured that heaven's not far away,
That can our lives in love control:
This is the truth of Christmas Day!

Now fruits of friendship shine amid
Green boughs that winter cannot kill;
Beneath snow-selfishness is hid
A life that can all hope fulfil:
We might be kind and good and true,
Whatever carping cynics say,—
Each life to each like sun and dew,—
So speaks to us sweet Christmas Day!

Love's holy child shall lead the race
Into God's kingdom pure and sweet,
Where souls are clothed in heavenly grace,
Where broken hearts their brothers meet.
Divineness comes to human kind,
When we love's inward light obey;
So like a summer in the mind,
Which nurtures flowers, is Christmas Day!

WILLIAM BRUNTON.

That Holy Thing.

They were all looking for a king
To slay their foes and lift them high:
Thou cam'st a little baby thing,
That made a woman cry.

O, Son of Man, to right my lot,
Nought but thy presence can avail;
Yet on the road thy wheels are not,
Nor on the sea thy sail!

My how or when thou wilt not heed,
But come down thine own secret stair,
That thou may'st answer all my need,
Yea, every by-gone prayer.

GEORGE MACDONALD.

"Universal Incarnation."

A CHRISTMAS-DAY SERMON

BY THE

REV. EDGAR J. FRIPP, B.A.

In this sermon I want to speak on the subject of the Incarnation. On Christmas Day our orthodox neighbours will celebrate their doctrine of this mystery as the fundamental truth of the Christian religion, and in some churches they will emphasize it by the repetition of the Athanasian Creed. By the Incarnation they mean the preternatural conception and birth of Jesus Christ. I want to point out that in rejecting that miracle we do not necessarily lay aside the Incarnation, but on the contrary may hold to it far more firmly. I have read the passages of Scripture which are regarded as the prophecy and fulfilment of the miracle. The former is from Isaiah VII., and runs as follows in the old authorised translation: "The Lord himself shall give you a sign: Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings." We know the orthodox interpretation of this. Immanuel is Jesus Christ to be born of the Virgin Mary. The name Immanuel, *God with us*, signifies the union of the divine nature with the human in Christ. "Butter and honey shall he eat"—Christ shall be very man, and shall be nourished as a man. And the sign that the birth of Immanuel, God and man in one person, shall really come to pass, is this: The two kings

of Syria and Israel—Rezin and Pekah—who are now in the 8th century before Christ threatening the kingdom of Judah, shall be overthrown and their country laid waste. But modern scholarship gives a very different and much simpler interpretation. In the first place a revised translation gives: "Behold, the damsel shall bear a son and call his name Immanuel. Curds and honey shall he eat until he know to refuse the evil and choose the good." And this almost certainly means that in the expectation of the writer a Judean princess will within a very short period bear a son who will have to eat the fare of privation in boyhood and youth—curds and honey, the only produce of his devastated country—but in manhood, when he knows good from evil, will prove a blessing to his people, a shield and protector from their enemies—"a God-with-us." There is, therefore, no reference to a miraculous birth, nor to the birth of Jesus seven hundred years later, but simply to contemporary events and immediate hopes. Nevertheless this passage of Scripture in an incorrect Greek translation, similar in its errors to our authorised version, without doubt made a deep impression on the early Christians and materially assisted, after Christ's death, to shape the legend of his birth contained in Matthew and Luke. I say 'legend,' because the story bears every mark of being such. The other two gospels, of Mark and John, say nothing about it—do not seem to be conscious that such a story existed. It is told only in Luke and Matthew, and even in them is probably an interpolation; because all through the rest of these gospels there is not a word about the miraculous nativity. There is not a solitary allusion to it in the account of his ministry. Neither his mother nor his brethren know anything of it. If they had they never would have thought him beside himself. Nor did his disciples know of it, else they would not have deserted him. "Indeed, had it been known and believed," says Mr. Stopford Brooke, "it would have rung from end to end of Palestine. If then it were true, nothing was ever so carefully concealed." Moreover, in the Epistles of St. Paul, which are nearer than the Gospels to the supposed event, we look in vain for any knowledge of such a miraculous origin of Jesus. There is not a trace of it, and it is impossible not to believe that if St. Paul had known of it he would in some way have referred to it. The story, therefore, must be regarded as a legend—a beautiful legend which established itself in the popular imagination toward the close of the first century of our era and passed into two of the Gospel narratives. In the same way, as Matthew Arnold reminds us, a precisely similar legend formed itself around the origin of Plato. "The father of Plato," said the Athenian story, "was upon his marriage warned by Apollo in a dream that his wife was about to bring forth a babe divinely conceived." Among Plato's disciples, who were students of philosophy and therefore more or less critical, this story, "although authorised by his family, languished and died. Had Plato founded a popular religion the case would have been different." It was the people with their honest feelings and simple notions and their readiness to credulity where they love, who established the story of Christ's miraculous incarnation. The legend represents the popular homage to a high ideal of purity, meekness, and love. "Christ," said the popular reverence, "was too pure, too humble, too gentle for man; he was too great and too good for earth; he came from heaven; he was born of a virgin and conceived of the Holy Ghost." With that *feeling* I think we can all sympathise. It may take a superstitious intellectual form, but the feeling itself is true. Every lofty mind who battles with the evil and raises the thought of his generation, awakens a similar homage in his disciples, and, long afterwards, in those who come under his influence in history. Who, for instance, can read the lives of such men as Gracchus—who died on behalf of the landless and homeless masses of Rome, and in his defeat foretold the coming degradation of the empire; or John the Baptist—whose brave spirit summoned Jesus from the quiet of Nazareth and who perished," as the old collect says, "boldly rebuking vice, and patiently suffering for the truth's sake;" or Francis of Assisi, the rich young man who followed literally the precept of the gospel and sold all that he had and gave to the poor, and became the leader of an order of poor friars, which revolutionised mediæval Europe; or Dante—one of the first and the greatest for whom St. Francis prepared the way, who died in exile from his city; or Wiclif—another true successor of Francis, the first Protestant, who

died of overwork and paralysis, teaching the people the gospel in English; or Milton—who went blind in defence of the Commonwealth, and died forgotton in the dissolute days of the Restoration; or John Brown—who perished in the war against Negro slavery:—who can read of such lives and not feel that there is something more than human in them, that the Holy Ghost was in their souls giving them power? Nor to feel this need we go to the master spirits of humanity. Probably it has been the privilege of everyone of us to know some man or woman, to speak with him, to learn from his lips, of whom we have said, "There is something divine in his thought and love; to be with him makes us feel nearer God." My friends, that is no delusion. Noble character does bring us nearer God. Something divine in their souls speaks to something divine in ours, and we rise in their presence to a higher and truer conception of the universe and of our own being. If we have had any deep moral history at all we know that some of the most precious moments, some of the most sacred moments, have been those when the influence of a nobler mind has descended upon us and compelled us to look up to new heights of character. If we carry about with us a prayerful heart such experiences are continually happening. One man's industry rebukes my idleness; another's patient suffering makes me ashamed of my feeble fretfulness; another's love drives away my ill-will; a child's innocent suggestions tell me how I have lost simplicity and truth. Everywhere, if I have ears to hear, there are divine voices speaking to the divine in me. Through my heroes and teachers, my books, my friends and neighbours, my children, the Infinite Spirit is always seeking my spirit to bring me nearer to Him. The mind of man is an unfathomable and sacred deep. The divine and the human mingle in its recesses. Every man is more than man. We are never alone. We are derived from and related to a source higher than ourselves, who is always with us and on the side of righteousness. In so far as we love, in so far as we think, the truth, in so far as we cleave to honour and justice, we share in the Divine Nature; the Higher Presence, the Shaping Power of all things dwells in us and gives us strength and peace. That is what I understand by the Incarnation. God *was* incarnate in Christ. Yes, more fully, more deeply, in a greater degree, but in the same manner as he is incarnate in all mankind. Christ was no miraculous exception. He was, as Paul said, "the firstborn of many brethren." What was true of Christ is true of humanity. We are all born—not of the ground, not of anything beneath us, but of Something above us, children of more than human parents, the offspring of that Infinite Love whom Jesus taught us to call "Our Father." I think there is, perhaps, nothing in orthodoxy more opposed to the teaching of Christ, or more abhorrent to his spirit, or that would give him more pain, than the words repeated at every service in the creed —"I believe in Jesus Christ the only Son of God." This is contradicted by the very first words of the Lord's Prayer, by every parable, by every undisputed word of Christ. If he taught one thing clearly and forcibly, if he left us one priceless legacy, it was his message to the world —to poor and rich, to slave and free, to Jew and Samaritan—that we are all the sons of the Divine, and that sin is the desecration of a holy and infinite relationship. St. Paul's message was essentially the same. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? . . The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. . . And because we are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of His sonship into our hearts whereby we cry 'Abba, Father.'" Yes, "whereby we cry 'Abba, Father.'" This mingling of the Divine with the human, this Presence of something more than man in the soul, is not only the gospel of Jesus and Paul, but is the truth underlying all religions and is the root of all prayer. There would be no worship, no churches, and no spiritual regeneration without it. Nay, there would be no reform, and no progress. The Divine in the human is the source and strength of the ideal; and I am persuaded that what we need at the present day to renew the hopes and thoughts of men, to conquer selfishness, to eradicate wrong, and to build up a nobler society, is a renewal of faith in the divine constitution and origin of human life.

The only failure a man ought to fear is failure in cleaving to the purpose he sees to be the best.

"Aunt Hannah."

Everyone is the better for having a defined position, and I sometimes fancy mine must be the "good creature" of the family.

It is a large and scattered family, and gives ample scope for every kind of usefulness, Time was when I was the spoilt child of it; but years have hurried on, and the bright promise was early nipped in the bud by the death of my dear parents, privileged to pass away within twenty-four hours of each other. As I left the churchyard where the sun shone softly down upon their undivided grave, and strove to realise that henceforward those true and tender hearts were sharers in the glorious sunshine of Eternal Day, I looked into the cold hard face of my eldest brother, and knew that the days of sympathetic love in my old home were over and done with for me. Robert was not unkind or unjust, but sympathy was a quality utterly wanting in his composition, and if he was just and fair towards others, what on earth could others want more, in heaven's name? he would ask impatiently.

Ah well, justice is much; but love and sympathy, what are they not worth in all our lives, from the highest lady in the land whose sympathy never fails in time of need, down to the little school child who will spare a few precious crumbs of cake for the hungry robin in its path?

My other brothers and sisters were all married and scattered over the world, and Robert's eldest children were but a few years younger than myself, the youngest of their father's generation.

For some years I lived on in the dear old home, and strove to be of what use I could. No one scrupled to make use of me, I am bound to say, and by degrees the family motto seemed to be, "Aunt Hannah will do it. *She* wont mind."

Did she mind? Sometimes I think she did.

The young ones were growing up, and to them my few additional years constituted, if not old age, at least advanced middle age. Little did they think, whilst their nimble feet whirled to Aunt Hannah's playing (I *could* play, and for many reasons threw my heart into doing my best for their dance music)—little did they think, I say, how my own shoes were twitching under the piano with a longing to be given a chance of a turn myself.

One night I overheard a slim young Guards-boy murmur to my niece—

"But, I say, won't your aunt be tired, playing so long?"

"Tired! Oh no, she won't mind," responded Edith. "She likes it."

I bent my head over the piano, and gulped down the choke that almost overpowered me as I steadily marked time in that valse tune of many memories. Up before the eyes of my memory rose that evening, seven years before, upon which my future life had seemed to hinge. I was twenty then, and had been for two years an inmate of my brother's house. I was twenty-seven now, and was still considered too young to have a home of my own by my elder relations, too old for young lady amusements by the younger generation.

So I steadily played on, and my thoughts floated away backwards to that evening I have hinted at. I saw once more a small dark-haired girl, with hazel eyes and a far-away look in them, and over her bent a broad-shouldered, curly-headed young giant, whose voice trembled as he said, "God bless you, darling little Hannah, I will come to-morrow and see Robert and you."

But oh, Mike, Mike, why did you never come?—never, never; and the next thing that I heard was that you had gone to India the following week, and the year after I heard that you were married. And oh, what had I done, what *had* I done, to deserve such a blow as this?

Had I misunderstood him? Good heavens! had I shown that I thought he loved me, and he had meant nothing and taken fright, and done the most merciful thing he could by vanishing from out of my life?

Night and day I wearied myself to think out this agonising puzzle. Speak to Robert, I dared not. What could he think of a girl who had admitted she loved some one, when the someone had too clearly not wished for her love?

Robert's wife was wrapped up in her babies, and on the only occasion on which I had braced my heart to ask her advice, had answered me through the reigning infant: "Tell her see muttent be 'toopid and glum, my Tootsee-wootsee; see mutt tum and play wiz oo, my precious, muttent see?"

Henceforward I fought my battle alone, and subsided into the long-suffering, placid Aunt Hannah, who was supposed "not to mind" the dreary bits of employment which all the others shirked.

Just when I had struck twenty-seven, my rich old godmother died, and to my surprise left to me a handsome slice of her fortune, coupling with it the command that I should take her name in place of my own. From Hannah Grey I became, therefore, straightway Hannah Sinclair. With my new name I furthermore asserted my independence, and set up for myself a little house in London. My dear old nurse took the lead in my household, and the first night that I established myself by my own fireside, and started as a free lone woman, I laid my head on her knees and cried as if my heart would break. Ailsie asked no questions, but stroked my head in silence. Some people are blessed with an instinctive sympathy and tact. My dear old Ailsie was one of them. We never once alluded to that evening in all the long years we spent together; but somehow I think she had grasped more than I ever guessed.

By degrees my little home became the useful rendezvous of all the family. My hall was many a time filled with forbidding-looking females, all unsummoned by me, but "come by appointment to see Mrs. Grey about the cook's place, mum;" and presently a cab would pull up with a jerk, and my sister-in-law would bustle in, dropping brown-paper parcels from her arms: "So sorry, dear, I had no time to write, as Baby's teeth bothered him so, but I knew you wouldn't mind." Hardly any of the undesirable-looking women ever answered, so the same ceremony was repeated many a time.

I did not mind the women so much, but the out-of-place men-servants, I own, were a trial to me. Frenchmen, Italians, Germans, Irishmen, all and sundry. They stood in rows, blocking up my little hall, and had been summoned by my niece Edith, to whom her mother had in most cases thrown the *Morning Post* and a heap of half-penny cards, saying, "Write to any likely ones, and tell them to meet me to-morrow. Aunt Hannah won't mind, and Baby wants me now."

That little trouble, however, was put an end to in this wise. One of the men turned out to have been a notorious burglar, and an attempt was made on my house, which failed, owing to the promptitude with which Ailsie had struck a light in the basement, whilst the footman locked himself securely into the pantry.

Robert was very kind about this, and peremptorily forbade any more appointments of the kind being made. He would see all men-servants at his own club in future.

So my life flowed evenly on for a year or two, and my nephews and nieces came and went, and my doors flew open to them heartily.

"Aunt Hannah," said Bobby one day, as he rushed in, laden with an enormous hamper, "you won't mind this standing here just while I'm having luncheon, will you? It's only a badger a fellow has given me to take home. It's awfully jolly if you'd like to have it out."

"No, thanks," I answered, with my pocket-handkerchief to my nose; "we can stand the hamper down in the area. It isn't exactly sweet, you know, Bobby."

"Not sweet! Why it's only a badger, and I can't stay long, because my train goes at three, don't you know?"

"But where's Tim?" I asked, looking beyond him to the empty hansom.

"Oh! by-the-bye, I forgot," he answered promptly. "Tim's sickening for the measles, they think, so mother thought he had better not go home; but as they won't keep him at old Blazer's," he continued, as he flung himself cheerily into an armchair in the sitting-room, "he is to follow by the next train, and mother wrote that she was sure you wouldn't mind if he came straight to you; but I was just to ask you, don't you know?"

Here I burst out laughing, and Bobby looked critically but approvingly at me, with both hands on his knees.

"I say, Aunt Hannah," he blurted out, "I'm never sure about you. Sometimes I think you are seventy, and sometimes you look seventeen; that's what you look now. I don't believe you're half as old-maidish as the girls think you."

"Thank you, Bobby," I said, kissing his jolly fat cheek, "I don't feel like seventy yet, and what a dear old boy you will be when I am! But now about Tim. I was going to have a

party to-night, and measles won't do well with that."

But it had to do, inasmuch as there was no time to put off anybody, and "the party" got as far as my closed front door, where they were met by an affable policeman, on duty for the purpose, at five shillings for the job, who informed them, with bated breath, that "there was h'infection in the 'ouse," and the grinding wheels were all that I heard of my guests for a long while afterwards.

One of them, wishing to combine kindness and caution, sent me a note of enquiry.

"DEAR HANNAH.—"How is your nephew? but please, dear, don't send an answer."

Tim was a dear fellow, and I did not catch the measles. He, too, was complimentary and encouraging about my age and infirmities, and went so far as to wonder if I hadn't been rather pretty when I was young.

That night, as Ailsie was brushing my rebellious locks, I ventured on a timid enquiry. "Ailsie, dear," I said in wheedling accents, "was I ever at all nice-looking when I was young?"

"When you was *what*, my dearie?"

"*Young*, Ailsie, *young*."

"Well," answered the dear old thing, poising the brush in the air, "it is so long ago, you see, Miss Hannah; you can't expect me to throw my mem'ry back so far."

"Ah, don't tease, Ailsie; I really want to know," I pleaded.

"Well, then, my dear, you was, and, what's more, you are; and that's the Gospel truth, and many's the one that thinks so—same as me,"

Why should I care? and yet I did. It was not because I was too ugly, then, that Mike had escaped from me. Other people had at times talked nonsense to me, when my heart had been too weary to take much heed, and my sister-in-law had chidden me for not responding when the talkers had been eligible. All that seemed long ages ago, and now I was a solitary and moderately rich woman, with a house of my own, and a parrot and a terrier; and I could be, and was, of use to many of my family, whose unfailing motto was as of old—"*she* won't mind;" and no one guessed that I was glad that I was not ugly. Had they been asked what my opinion might have been on the subject, they would have, as usual, believed me indifferent. If I passed as a "good creature," there were but a few steps to go to arrive at the fool, maybe. Tim's good opinion cheered me wonderfully, and I saw him start for home with thorough regret.

A few days later, the sweeps being in possession of the drawing-room, a telegram came announcing the arrival of one of my nieces for a violin lesson in my house, "if I did not mind." Hurriedly I had the piano rescued from upstairs, and carried into my little front snuggery; and, just as it was put into place by the awkward but willing helpers we had caught at a few moments' notice, my niece arrived, and with her came a graceful, ladylike girl, whose looks attracted me greatly.

"Ruth, this is Aunt Hannah," said my niece. "You didn't mind, did you, Aunt Hannah? We thought you would not; and Ruth plays my accompaniments so well. We always play together now."

I had been so long away from the old home that I had fallen out of knowledge of the young people's friends; but, from Ruth's looks, was glad she should be one of them, whoever she might be.

The violin master came, and the lesson gave me intense pleasure. Ruth's accompaniment was perfect; and, as the violin was being carefully wiped and restored to its case, I begged her to "play me something—anything—whatever she loved best—Mendelssohn for choice, if she would." One after another she played my best loved old friends, and I turned impatiently when the footman opened the door and said, "a gentleman had called for the young lady with Miss Grey."

"My uncle," said Ruth, apologetically.

"Pray ask him to come in," I said; and the next moment Mike stood once more before me. He bowed a little shyly, and I, with my back to the window, stood spell-bound and silent.

Yes, it was Mike—huge, winsome, heart-breaking Mike; and I must greet him as best I might.

"Mr. Vivian," I faltered, "I—I had no idea it was you."

Two huge strides brought him to my side.

"Hannah!" he shouted, "Miss Grey! Why, I was sent to a Miss Sinclair's! Have I come to the wrong house?"

The young people flew to him, open-mouthed, about this wonderful thing, and chattered, mercifully for me, till I had recovered my balance a little.

From time to time I felt his eye upon me, and grew a trifle hot and angry under it. Why should he look at me now in that way? He had been married for years, and I—well I had settled into my old-maid ways—and I had "got over it," as the saying goes.

As if we ever lost "the marks of that which once had been."

As they all trooped out together, he turned back at the door, and grasping my hand tightly, said, "Why did you say 'not at home,' nine long years ago?"

"I *didn't!*" I exclaimed, indignantly, in a stifled voice, "you never came."

"*Didn't* I?" he answered, and then he was gone.

That night I slept not at all. Backwards and forwards that refrain rang in my ears, "Didn't I?" "Didn't I?" Oh! Mike, oh, faithful, large-hearted Mike, have I been wronging you all these years? Did you come, did you?—and I never knew it—and now it is too late.

Does she love you, I wonder, as I did—as I do, God help me. I must live it down and crush it under foot, but for this one night I will allow myself the joy of knowing that he did come—he did come: the rest I cannot even guess at.

Happy, miserable, restless, and yet soothed, I came down next morning, and found I could settle down to nothing in the way of business. The piano stood where it had been placed the day before for the girls, and after many vain efforts to attend properly to writing which ought to have been done, I wandered up to it, and sat me down listlessly, trying to pick up the thread of all that child's sympathetic fingers had done such full justice to; and, as I played, my heart grew lighter, and by degrees my Mendelssohns modulated off into lighter music, and I found myself beating time once more with my foot to that Waldteuffel Valse which had been dearer to me than all beside. How I played! I threw my heart, my whole heart, into it; and as I came to the final chord, I suddenly flung my arms upon the desk in front of me, and burst into such a passion of weeping as I had never in all my life given way to. How long I wept I do not know; but I know that, then and there, I prayed with all my might for strength to root out, for good and all, this cruel, absorbing, disgraceful love, and rising, with one last strangled sob and a firm determination that not another should escape me now or ever again, I saw the door opening quietly, and in one moment Mike had hold of both my hands. In vain I tried to pull them away. They were gently but firmly gripped, and his dear voice spoke rapidly in agitated loving tones.

"Don't speak, darling; I know what you think. Let me speak first, for the sake of the dear old times. Let me clear up matters first. I am not the blackguard you think me—God forbid. Sit down, and let me speak."

What could I do but obey him? I sat down, and as he spoke my heart leaped and danced within me till I could have shouted for joy, and yet I felt ashamed of my delight. For had he not gone through deep waters, dear fellow? The poor little frivolous childish wife had lived but one year, but had wrought such havoc in his life in that short time that it were more charitable to tell nothing of it to any who did not know the miserable story already. Peace be with her, poor thing. I need think of her no more.

Then came the explanation of our own misfortunes. He had gone straight from my door the previous evening down to the dear old home to see my brother, and arrive at that explanation. It was simple enough.

My good sister-in-law, on that eventful morning nine years before, had been frightened about one of her infants, and had bidden the servants to admit no one.

"Not for the young ladies, mum? not for Miss Hannah?" the butler had asked; and she, in all simplicity, poor soul, had said and believed, "Miss Hannah will not wish to see any one either," and so the answer had been given full in his face when Mike had called.

"Miss Hannah Grey *not at home?* You are *sure?*" he had asked incredulously.

"Quite sure, sir; my h'orders was that Miss Hannah, pertickler, didn't wish to see no one who might call. Mr. Grey, sir? Mr. Grey is h'out."

The story had taken long to tell, but I hung upon every word of it, and as it came to an end,

the honest loving grey eyes looked full into mine, and my hands were once more imprisoned. "You know my story, now, my darling; if I thought that you could—that you would—"

"Bless you! *She* won't mind," broke in upon us in hoarsely confidential tones, and, springing up, we faced round towards the window whence came the startling sounds.

Mike's protecting arm was round me in an instant, and Polly, swinging violently head downwards from the ring inside his cage, shrieked aloud. "Hannah! Hann*ah*!! *You* don't mind, do you?"

And this time I didn't!

Historic Notes on Midland Churches.

No. IX. Part V.

WHITCHURCH—THE PRESBYTERIAN CHAPEL

Richard Shawcross, after completing his course at Manchester College, York (1817-23), settled at Lincoln as minister of the High Street Chapel, where he remained until his removal to Whitchurch, early in 1827, where he first signs the register, on 10th March in that year. Here he continued as minister of the chapel and master of the "Benyon" Charity School, until the end of 1844, when he conformed and took orders in the Church of England. He held various curacies from that date until 1866, when he was appointed to the Vicarage of Ellerburne, with Wilton, Yorks, which he held till his death, on 10th December, 1886, aged 84.

The congregation much decreased under the ministry of Mr. Shawcross, and at the time of his departure, very few worshippers indeed were left. Divine service was discontinued, the school was kept on for a few years longer, and then closed, and the once well-furnished chapel was finally dismantled, and turned into a hall for temperance and other works. Several of the bodies from the burial ground were removed to Ash churchyard, and on 9th December, 1891, the shell of the chapel and the out-buildings, containing in all 314 square yards, were sold by public auction to the present owner for £161; the proceeds, under a clause in the old trust, going to the funds of the British and Foreign School Society.

A word must now be said respecting the trust connected with the chapel, known as Thomas Benyon's charity. Thomas Benyon, by his will, dated 1st November, 1707, directed certain copyhold property in Alkington, near to Dodington, to "stand charged with the yearly payment of 40s., to be paid to the preaching minister of the newly erected Presbyterian Meeting-house in Dodington; to continue as long as such minister should officiate there, and no longer, and that the residue of the rents should be applied in educating so many of the poor children of the parish of Whitchurch as could be conveniently taught therewith." And he further directed that if "the preaching at the said meeting-house should cease, or none be there by a Presbyterian minister, the payment of 40s. yearly should cease, and be for ever afterwards applied by the trustees for educating the said poor children." Trustees were from time to time appointed, and a master seems to have regularly conducted the school, which was held so late as 1831, in a building "adjoining the Dodington Chapel, and forming part of the property held by the trustees of the chapel." By a deed, dated 17th and 18th July, 1815, John Kenrick and Thomas Kirkpatrick, the surviving trustees, conveyed the property upon the trusts of the will to William H. Watson, Samuel Savage Kenrick, and William Kenrick, it being described as "5 parcels of land in Alkington, commonly called Benyon's Charity." The land, in 1831, comprised "8 closes, containing 22a., 1r., 14p., and was let for £50 per annum. In February, 1829, Mr. Shawcross, "the then officiating minister of the chapel," was appointed by the two surviving trustees, with a salary of £40 per annum, "to teach 20 boys in reading, writing, and arithmetic, with liberty to take any other boys into the school he might think proper." The nomination of the 20 free scholars was left by the trustees to the members of the congregation, who met occasionally for this purpose. "Mr. Shawcross received the rents of the land, and debited the account with the payment of £2 per annum, which he retained as minister, and £40 per annum as the salary of schoolmaster. The trustees do not seem to "have interfered in the concerns of the charity. One lived 25 miles, and the other about 18 miles from Whitchurch."

In the Charity Commissioners' report of 1831, it is stated "that most of the scholars are not sons of members of the congregation mentioned. It nevertheless seems proper that the election

should be left to that body, and it is to be observed that the master who preceded Mr. Shawcross had, as it is represented to us, nearly 50 scholars on an average, who were taught free in respect of the charity.

It appears to us that the trustees, who are themselves dissenters from the Established Church, have been actuated rather with a desire of increasing the endowments of the minister of Dodington Chapel, or of conferring a benefit on the congregation attending there, than of applying the funds of the charity in educating as many of the poor children of the parish of Whitchurch as the funds will admit. We are informed, however, that they are about to appoint two new trustees, and it is to be hoped that such regulations will then be adopted as may be most conducive to the objects of the testator's bounty, and most conformable with his directions. Previously to February, 1829, the accounts were kept by the late W. H. Watson, one of the trustees, and for some time after his decease by his executors. The sum of £30 a year was paid to the former schoolmaster and £2 to the minister of Dodington Chapel. The residue, except a balance of £10 11s. 4d. was applied in some improvements on the property and other incidental expenses. Of the balance £6 was paid to the late schoolmaster and the residue was paid over to Mr. Shawcross."

When Mr. Shawcross left Whitchurch, and there was no congregation to look after the schools, the trustees of the charity seem to have appointed a master, and kept the trust in order until 24th March, 1863, when application was made to the Charity Commissioners for the discharge of the two surviving trustees, Samuel Savage Kenrick and William Kenrick, the appointment of new trustees, establishment of a scheme, and vesting the legal estate in the official trustee of charity lands. On the 24th July, 1866, the Charity Commissioners made an order to that effect and approved of the scheme, viz.: "That the income of the said charity shall be applied by the trustees—Messrs. Robert Thursfield Smith, Thomas Kempster, John German Harrison, and William Bright—in aid of the Wesleyan Schools at Whitchurch established by indenture dated 1st May, 1862."

In 1836 the registers of the chapel were fortunately deposited with the registrar-general. Volumes 1 and 2 are thin quarto books in paper covers, volume 1 the thinner of the two. They are not ruled for entries, and are very faded and indistinct. Volume 3 is a bound quarto, in fairly good condition on ruled paper. It contains only a few pages of entries—last dated 10th March, 1836—the extract from Mr. Jenkins' commonplace book and a note by Mr. Shawcross stating that prior to his ministry, *i.e.*, from 1701 to 1827 the registers were in the custody of one or other of the trustees, and are fragmentary. This is very evident, as between 1724 and 1743—the period nearly covered by Mr. Colthurst's ministry—there are no entries.

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REGISTERS IN CUSTODY OF REGISTRAR-GENERAL.

I. Baptisms, 1708-1724.
II. " 1743-1823.
III. " Births, and Burials, 1823-1836.

GEORGE EYRE EVANS,
Dodington Parsonage,
Whitchurch, in Salop.

(*Next month.*—ALCESTER—OLD MEETING-HOUSE.)

We are hearing much of late about religion without theology. That will do for babies, but you cannot divorce heart from head in earnest, sincere manhood. All conduct is ultimately based on some *theory* of things.

THE CHILDREN'S PAGE.

The Legend of the Christ-Child.

A little child walked alone in the country, and seated himself by the side of the road and cried.

His bare feet were swollen and sore; his little hands were blue with the cold. He was barely covered by a poor dress of thin, white stuff; and the frost of the morning had wet the curls of his golden hair with a freezing rain. There was a wonderful sweetness in his eyes full of tears, and yet, while his eyes wept, his little mouth seemed to smile.

Ever and anon he rested for a moment, clasped his hands as if in prayer, and then resumed his walk. To those who passed by and asked him why he cried, the child answered, "I am seeking my father and my mother."

Now on that day a young and rich lady was returning home in a carriage. She was richly attired, and seated on soft cushions covered with silk; she saw the little child walking with bare feet, and cold, and her heart moved at the sight of his wonderful beauty. So she stopped the carriage, and having called to the little traveller, said to him:

"Where are you going, little child?"

"I am going to seek my father and mother."

"And where will you find your father and mother? Are they far away?"

The child replied, "They went away from me to find work, because they are poor."

"Well, I am rich, get up into my carriage, and shelter from the cold wind which makes your cheeks and hands so blue, and rest your bruised feet. Let me be a mother to you."

"Your face is beautiful, like my mother's," said the child, "and your voice is sweet like hers, but tell me if your *heart* is like hers? Please lift me up into your lap."

"Child, your words astonish me! I offer you a place by my side, and I am willing to extend my hand to help you to climb up here. Why do you wish me to get down and soil my feet in the muddy road?"

"Oh!" answered the little one, "you spoke to me of taking the place of my mother, and my mother, in order to take me into her arms, was never afraid of soiling her feet."

The young woman blushed, and without reply, made a sign to her coachman to drive on; but her heart was sad.

Still the travelling child kept on his journey, and the night drew near.

Then a poor woman, dragging a bundle of faggots, was going towards her home. She saw the child, and had compassion on him. She questioned him, and stooping down kissed him, and took him by the hand, and said to him: "Come to my hut; you shall warm yourself with my children, and you shall with them share their supper of bread and milk."

The child looked at the poor woman and loved her, because she was bent under a burden, and because she had said unto him, "Come and you shall be as one of my children."

The child smiled upon her, looking up into her face with sweet trustfulness; and, just as they came to the door of her hut, he pulled a little gold cross from his bosom, slipped it into her hand, and disappeared.

That same evening there was seen upon the bank of a stream, which was crossed by a plank placed on two stones, a child seated in the moonlight. The wind blew his golden curls, and he pressed his two little arms upon his breast, as if to warm himself.

Some one asked him in passing, what he was waiting for? He replied, "I am waiting for my father."

Just then, a poor, blind, old man came to cross, directing his steps towards the frail bridge by feeling with his stick along the rough and stony ground.

The child rose, and running to meet the poor, blind man, took him by the hand and led him, for the road in that place was dangerous.

Then, placing the hand of the old man on his shoulder, he served him for a support across the bridge, and far along the road into the neighbouring city. And when they came to his dwelling and had entered, there was no child, but one in the brightness of an angel stood by the old man's side.

And then, soft and sweet as a gentle wind rustling the forest leaves, or the sound of a far-off vesper bell, were heard these words: "I re-visit the earth to comfort and help. I come as a little child to seek my father and mother among those who have need of one to love them. The poor widow, who weeps and toils and loves, is my mother; the blind, old man whom I guide over the stones of the road is my father; the orphans who have no one to pity them, these are my brothers and sisters."

Then it was known who the child-angel was.

The Beasts on Christmas Eve.

They tell us that in Sweden,
At twelve each Christmas night,
The dumb beasts kneel to worship,
And see the Christmas light!
This fancy makes men kinder
To the creatures needing care;
They give them Christmas greeting,
And dainty Christmas fare.
The cat and dog sup gaily,
And a sheaf of golden corn
Is raised above the roof-tree,
For the birds on Christmas morn.

We do not live in Sweden,
But we can feed the birds,
And make dumb creatures happy,
By kindly deeds and words.
No animal so humble,
No living thing so small,
But that the God who made us
Has made and loves them all.

The Joys of Christmas.

The peculiarity of Christmas joy is that it belongs to the present life, to the present hour, to earthly homes, to human love, and is therefore universal. Christmas stands for the blessings which all men inherit by being born under the influences of Christianity. No one need sign a creed or make a profession in order to have a happy Christmas. As the sun shines on the evil and the good, on the just and the unjust, so Christmas pours its liberal light into every home. All are in fellowship with each other around the Christmas tree. All are Christ's little ones together. This is the blessed feeling which Christmas brings every year,—a communion of joy in the coming of a little child. For one week we have a truly catholic and universal church, in which are no divisions, no sects no parties, no saints nor sinners. Around the cradle of this infant all are one.

Christmas is the apotheosis of infancy. It hallows all infants. It makes all childhood sacred. Every infant in Christian lands is a Christ-child. It is no longer as necessary to say, "Take heed how ye despise these little ones," as it was when Jesus said it. In the rudest homes, in the worst conditions of society, the coming of a little child brings a sense of gratitude, wonder, reverence. The star of the magi still stands over the lowliest cradle. The angel song is heard in the hearts of the humblest parents. Christmas makes an aureole of heavenly light around all the infants in Christian lands.

But Christmas is more than this. While Easter gives hope of an immortal life, Christmas brings to us the hope of a better life in this world. There descends on humanity, every Christmas Day, an implicit hope that the world is to be redeemed from its wrongs and sins. It is not explicit; it is not often expressed to ourselves. It is a feeling hidden in the heart, not any distinct thought. All inspirations, before they become clear to the intelligence, begin thus as obscure sentiments, which, like seeds hidden in the ground, develope afterward into opinions, beliefs, and knowledge.

Such a sentiment comes every Christmas to all of us. Evil is overcome for a while by good. The world is not so bad a place as it seemed. Christmas comes like sunshine after storm. The clouds roll away in great purple masses, making a background of shade behind meadows, woods, and hills, all bathed in the same glorious light. Whatever be the cause of this glad, hopeful feeling which pervades all Christian lands at this time, the fact is evident. Gloomy and cynical philosophers are silent; gloomy theologians retire. What minister, be he ever so orthodox, would think of preaching about hell and eternal punishment on Christmas Day? We sing the hymns of joy, we read the psalms of thanksgiving, at this time. The world is not altogether a vale of tears, even to the sad-browed Calvin.

It was a fortunate thing for the poor slaves that the South took its customs from the Church of England, and not from the Puritans. For the slaves had their merry Christmas, and during one week in the long year the weight of their bondage was lightened. They could go and come, and be happy in their cabins, eat and drink, sing, dance, and play. They became as little children, and the blessing of the Christ-child fell on them, too.

I once attended a midnight mass in the cathedral of Geneva on the night before Christmas. The full moon bathed the marble walls in soft beauty, and, when we entered, we found the vast space filled with a crowd listening to the glad music and gazing at the ceremonies of the high altar. We stood near a chapel where, carved in stone, knelt the figure of a cardinal of the Pallavicini house, while around him were kneeling princes and beggars, old men and little children. Such a union in common worship does men good. It puts them in mind of the ever-present providence of God, who continually sends to his children new prophets and redeemers, coming in the form of little children.

On Christmas all the world unites in a common gladness.

If we attempt to analyze the feeling which belongs to the birth of Christ, it may be that we see in the case of the infant Jesus how God sends, in a new-born child, new hope for the children of men. The world is ever made new by the arrival of children. In every little child there appears the possibility of a new spiritual and moral impulse. Unimagined hopes cluster around every cradle. We know what men are—

they have shown their possibilities; but no one knows what new possibilities are hidden from our sight in each infant. He may be a Shakspere or a Newton, the prophet of a new age, the saint who shall inspire a purer faith, the sage to discover the laws which shall mould a better civilization, the reformer to unbind heavy burdens and remove all miseries. Thus hope comes to us with little children. They may be the seeds of mighty possibilities, of forces giving a new impulse to the race. Though we are bound fast in the chains of inexorable law, of fixed external conditions, every infant brings a new and incalculable factor of moral force; and through each of these little ones there is an open way by which the higher world may come down into ours, to produce new morals and better manners.

Christmas and its joys are the unconscious testimony of the human heart to the universal blessings which have been given man by the birth of one child. This joy is confined to no church. It belongs to Roman Catholic and Protestant, to the Greek Church and the Armenian, to the Quaker and the Unitarian. It passes easily beyond the boundaries of profession and name.

There is no doubt that the whole Christian world has a more living sense of the nearness of God, of his providence, of his love, than it would have had but for the profound faith of Jesus.

I have known those who had elaborated a theory by which the whole universe was turned into a mechanism, and God found to be an unnecessary hypothesis. The great web of law and force was woven ceaselessly, without any divine providence. Their system seemed complete on every side. "There can be no such thing," they said, "as sin or salvation; for man's conduct is the result of irresistible forces in his brain and blood. What we call conscience is a modification of the gray matter of the brain. Immortality is not only unproved, but it is unprovable. Righteousness is a question of temperament." The theory was carefully elaborated and seemed to be demonstrated. But all at once we hear that these advanced thinkers, so triumphant in their unanswerable logic, have gone into the Roman Catholic Church, or been confirmed in the episcopal Church, or been converted by Moody and Sankey. What was the cause of this sudden conversion? It was because they had left out of their system the hunger of their own heart for something infinite and eternal. They had reasoned as though man were only an argumentative machine. They had denied the existence of a soul, and their soul had suddenly claimed its rights. The whole of their admirable system melted away, like the ice palace in St. Petersburg at the return of the sun. Then how sweet seemed the divine love of Jesus, which showed once more the face of a heavenly Father! God spoke to them in their hearts, and said, "This my son was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found."

The great blessing which Jesus has bestowed on mankind, and which makes the whole world joyful because of his coming, is that he leads us up into a richer and fuller life. It is not that he teaches truths never known before, or that he had supernatural power over the outward world. It is that he has made God's love, God's providence, divine truth, immortality, a part of the experience of mankind. He has made these convictions to enter into our knowledge, far beneath the region of speculation and argument. Argument and reasoning give us opinions and beliefs, but knowledge comes only from experience. Only by experience of outward things we know the outward world: by inward experience alone we know the world of infinite truth, beauty and love. Jesus has given to mankind the great impulse which has quickened in them these experiences, and so he continues to-day to be the best friend and helper of the human race.

There is a beautiful legend that on Christmas all evil spirits are deprived of their power to harm, and that even the devils and the accursed in hell enjoy a brief rest from sin and misery. Shakspere has used this legend:—

> "Ever 'gainst that season comes
> Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
> The bird of dawning singeth all night long;
> And then, they say, no spirit dare stir abroad;
> The nights are wholesome; then no planets strike,
> So hallowed and so gracious is the time."

However that may be, it is certainly true that many evil spirits are held in check by the coming of Christmas. Christmas assuaged the spirit of oppression at the South, and brought rest to the slave; it pacifies the strife of parties, and makes a vacation in the bitterness of

politics; it suspends the quarrels of sects. The hard bigot on one side and the sharp infidel on the other take each other's hands over the child's cradle. The man who bitterly attacks Christianity, and he who defends it with an equal bitterness, enjoy a kindly Christmas side by side. All this is a presage of the time when wars shall cease; when the whole Church shall be one; when the Christ of love and truth shall be everywhere accepted, obeyed, and loved, and the knowledge of God shall fill the earth as the waters cover the sea.

JAMES FREEMAN CLARKE.

Threnody.

Leave we our dead within our Father's keeping,
Of peace possessed;
Deep in the bosom of his silence sleeping,
In perfect rest.

Here, in the green earth's charitable garden,
This dust we lay;
No suns shall scorch nor winters harden,
Nor winds dismay.

Not with an unbefitting lamentation,
Nor fruitless cry;
Rather with wiser voice of sure elation,
We bid good-bye.

Spirit but travels to the parent Spirit:
The bird wings home,
A dearer habitation to inherit,
No more to roam.

Father, who gavest them, in love discerning
What love would claim,
Here in our anguish for Thy gift's returning,
We praise Thy name.

Praise for the souls that for so sweet a season
Endeared our days;
Praise that shall 'whelm our tears and our unreason,
Victorious praise.

AMBROSE BENNETT.

All of God's angels come to us disguised.
Sorrow and sickness, poverty and death,
One after another lift their frowning mock;
And we behold the seraph's face beneath,
All radiant with the glory and the calm
Of having looked upon the front of God.

J. R. Lowell.

What's in a Name?

The late Rev. James Gilmour of the London Missionary Society, author of "Among the Mongols" and "Adventures in Mongolia," was one of the most devoted missionaries of modern times. He would set out, carrying on his back all he needed for his use, and take long journeys among the nomadic Mongols, learning their language, healing their diseases, and striving to teach them a purer religion than the corrupt Buddhism they cling to so tenaciously. To the Mongol, Buddha is the highest conception of God; and no other term conveys so much of the essential ideas we attach to the word "God," as does the title of the self-denying, gentle, and compassionate Gautama.

Once, when I was conversing with Mr. Gilmour in Peking, he told me that the great sinologues had prevailed on the Bible Society to adopt a majestic designation for God in the Mongolian Bible; but, he added: "In our teaching the Mongols we shall have to bring ourselves to use Buddha; for this word conveys to them more of the thought of God than any other does, or will do in our time. I do not like the term; but if I want to teach them about God, I have to call him Buddha, whatever the sinologues or Bible Society may say."

"Awful!" would be the exclamation of the "unco guid" orthodox Christian. "A missionary to the heathen, sinking so low as to call the Lord of heaven and earth *Buddha!*" Yes, very awful, no doubt; but Mr. Gilmour won converts, and carried new, inspiring, beautiful thoughts of God to many a Mongol heart, while the majority of orthodox as well as heterodox Christians convert no one, and carry no high thought of God to a single soul. Worse still, many of them never try to do so; and, of those who do try, numbers fail because, with all their orthodoxy or high critical attainments, they lack the gentle, kind sympathetic spirit which won for Mr Gilmour a welcome to the Mongol's tent, and for his gospel a welcome to the Mongol's heart.

Now that he has passed away, and much of the work he did so heartily is invisible and forgotten, still there are men and women in the tents, and on the vast plains outside the Great Wall of China, who carry a little more light and hope

and comfort and strength in their hearts, because they once listened to the old story he told them of "the great Father you call Buddha."

Ah! men who call God King and Sovereign, do not reflect how many doubtful associations and low, brutal ideas have been connected with these theological terms. After all, it may be as well to say Buddha as Lord, Jehovah, or God; for at least one reason—less blood clings to the memory of Buddha than to the titles by which Christians designate the object of their worship. *Possibly* the All-Father would listen to one of his his children even if he prayed thus :—

"Buddha of boundless light!"
Day-bringing Sun,
Moon to illumine my night,
Morning and evening star,
All-encompassing One.

Rock of the ages gone,
Rock of to-day,
Shelter of isolate one,
Home of all souls of men,
Foundation and stay.

Watcher and Saviour and Friend,
Distant but near,
My spirit's beginning and end,
Inspiring companion and guide,
Awful, but dear.

Praise to the Father of all,
Thy will be eternally done.
Oh, hear when in weakness I call,
Strengthen my heart in its need,
Light-giving, health-bringing Sun,
Infinite, Infinite One!

W. H. JAMES.

Beautiful faces, those that wear
The light of a pleasant spirit there,
It matters little if dark or fair.

Beautiful hands are those that do
Work that is earnest, brave and true,
Moment by moment the long day through.

Beautiful feet are they that go
On kindly ministries to and fro,—
Down lowliest ways, if God wills so.

Beautiful lives are they that bless,
Silent rivers of happiness,
Whose hidden fountains few may guess.

News from the Field.

BIRMINGHAM.—(*Church of the Messiah*).—The annual meeting in connection with the Church of the Messiah Sunday Schools was held on Monday evening, November 12th, in the Schoolroom adjoining the church. Mrs. A. C. Osler presided, and amongst those present were the Rev. L. P. Jacks, Messrs. J. A. Kenrick, T. Ryland, T. H. Russell, G. Titterton, H. New, A. Kenrick, Tranter, Pipe, and a large number of ladies. The report dealing with the work of the Sunday schools showed that during the year the number of scholars had risen from 493 to 533, and the average attendances had been very satisfactory. The report of the Home Mission stated that during the first six months of the year the depression in trade led to many cases of extreme poverty coming under the notice of the mission. Through the kindness of members of the congregation many families were tided over the most critical periods of their lives. Mr. Tranter (the missionary), gave details of several of the sad cases he had come across in the course of 2,200 visits. The financial statements, read by Mr. Ryland, showed a balance of £3 9s. 7½d. on the Sunday schools account, and a balance of £20 13s. 5½d. on the poor's fund account. Mr. Ryland desired to draw attention to the subscription list, which amounted to £151 12s. 6d. He said their fixed charges amounted to £173, and he considered that when their fixed charges exceeded the subscription list, it was a very unhealthy state of things. In moving the approval of the reports and accounts, Mrs. Osler said that all those who knew anything of the work carried on for so many years in the schools and home mission, must be deeply anxious that nothing should interfere with that course of work which had had such beneficial results in the past—(cheers). Having referred to the teaching work of the schools, she said that it must be a great encouragement to those engaged in al branches of the work of their church to feel the spirit, energy, hopefulness, and vigour which had been brought amongst them afresh by Mr. Jacks—(cheers)—and she felt quite sure the more Mr. Jacks saw the work that was being done in the schools and home mission, the more he would appreciate and value the steady perseverance which was doing so much in a quiet way, and with such beneficent results — (cheers). Mr. Pipe seconded the motion, which was carried. In the course of the evening, the Rev. L. P. Jacks delivered a short address, and the business proceedings were interspersed with musical items.

EVESHAM.—The second of a series of Theological lectures was given on Thursday evening, November 22nd, by the Rev. Joseph Wood, of Birmingham, whose subject was "The Religion of Jesus." There was a good attendance and it is evident that these lectures are arousing much interest in the town.

LYE. — (*School Extension Fund, &c.*) — Amount acknowledged as promised or received a month ago: £170 12s. Later subscriptions: Liverpool Unitarian

Fellowship Fund, £5; Mr. W. Colfox, Bridport, £5; Mrs. Haslam, Bolton, £2; Sir P. Manfield, M.P., Northampton, £2; Mr. J. T. Preston, London, £1; Mr. H. Thomas, Bristol, £1; Lieutenant-Colonel Trevelyan, Penzance, £1: Mr. H. Jeffery, London, 10s. 6d.; Mr. W. Haslam, Bolton, 10s.; Misses Lee, Kinver, 10s.; Mr. H. J. Morton, Scarborough, 10s. Will subscribers who have kindly promised subscriptions please note that the work of building the new rooms is now in hand.

SHREWSBURY.—The 203rd anniversary of the opening of High Street Church was commemorated on Sunday, October 28. The services were conducted by the minister, the Rev. G. Myers, F.G.S., and were attended by attentive and appreciative congregations. The floral decorations for the occasion were very effective, and the musical part of the service did credit to both choir and organist. The following is a sketch of the evening discourse from a local paper:—Mr. Myers said they were that day celebrating the 203rd aniversary of the opening of their church, which, on October 25, 1691, was dedicated, as a Christian Church, for the worship of God, and the preaching of the religion of the Gospel. But it was well to remember that their society was in existence for about thirty years previous to the year 1691. It was on August 24, 1662, that the Act of Uniformity was passed, requiring all ministers and people to conform to the reformed, or newly-formed, and then but recently established, Church of England. This caused three of the ministers of the town to quit their respective churches, where they had faithfully ministered for many years, rather than conform and violate their consciences or sacrifice their manly integrity and Christian duty, which they held to be a more important authority than Parliament or the Church. It was the ministers from St. Mary's and St. Chad's, who, with considerable numbers of their congregations, quitted their parish churches, and for nearly thirty years suffered persecution, fines, and imprisonment; kept together, strengthened, and consoled, and supported each other, until, as they all knew, the Toleration Act was passed in 1689. Then that church was erected by those who had remained faithful as pronounced Nonconformists, and therefore their church was the first Nonconformist place of worship erected in the town. The foundation of their church was absolute freedom, ignoring all creeds of any kind whatever. Dogmas were not essential to the faith taught by Jesus, which must always be the same, and was the one, universal religion of God, in the living in obedience to God, in being good and doing good, and living in a spirit of love and charity. Their church had stood for these principles since its origin. That was the only free church in Shrewsbury. If there was another, where was it? He would like to see it. Their church stood for freedom of thought for each individual in matters of religion, and that everyone should be true to his own convictions. Religion did not consist in matters of belief, however true the belief might be, but in obeying the will of God, and in being good to man and woman; and only in this way could they find that unity of spirit in religious life which would make of one communion all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Collections were made on behalf of the Choir Fund.

WHITCHURCH.—The second week-night service was held on Wednesday, November 14th, the preacher being the Rev. James C. Street, of the Church of the Saviour, Birmingham, whose subject of "Pioneers for Time and Eternity" bore especially upon the difficult work which this church and Men's Club are trying to do in this rural town. Members of orthodox churches were present, who, at the close of the service, were pleased to meet and to know Mr. Street. The collection covered expenses.

WOLVERHAMPTON. — The congregation of the Unitarian Church, Snow Hill, Wolverhampton, have long felt the need for new and more commodious school accommodation, and after many months of hard and unceasing work on the part of friends and supporters of the cause, a new iron building, costing £125, has been erected at the rear of the church. It measures 40ft. by 20ft. About £30 will be required for furnishing, heating, &c., and it is hoped that this will be raised soon in order that the winter's work may be commenced free of debt. £135 has already been collected. The opening ceremony was performed on Monday evening, Nov. 18th, by Mr. F. Nettlefold, of London, in the presence of a large assembly. Mr. Charles Harding, of Birmingham, occupied the chair, and was supported by the Pastor (Rev. L. G. Harris Crook), Rev. Peter Dean (Walsall), Rev. H. McKean (Oldbury), and the Rev. H. Shelley (Dudley), as well as Messrs. Perry, Potts, Ling, Fellows, Ricket, Brindley, and other members of the congregation. The first part of the proceedings took place in church, and the Chairman offered an apology for the non-attendance of the Rev. Joseph Wood, of Birmingham. Sympathetic letters were received from the Rev Dr. Berry and other ministers. Mr. Harding also expressed his intention to give a donation of £5 5s. Prior to declaring the room open, Mr. Nettlefold, in a thoughtful speech, dwelt on the work of Sunday schools and the religious instruction of the young. Fifty years ago he said the teaching was almost altogether confined to elementary education, but the standard of intelligence had vastly increased since then, and a teacher's work was consequently much easier and more pleasant. The main object which ought to be kept in view was to teach the young to think for themselves. In dealing with the question of religious instruction in public schools, he maintained that those who had control of the Board schools should be those who had sympathy with them. He advised his hearers to be extremely careful and wary about putting any Anglican clergyman on the School Board. He did not deny that there were high-minded clergymen who would work for the cause of education, but they were terribly in the minority. He congratulated that church upon the commencement of a new era in its history, and expressed a hope that the school would be the means of stimulating its religious and social life. Tea was afterwards served, and during the evening a concert was given.

Midland Church Calendar for December.

ALCESTER: The Old Meeting House.
Minister: Rev. John Dale, Salford House. Service at 6 p.m.

ATHERSTONE: Unitarian Chapel.
Minister: Rev. J. Howard, of Tamworth. Service at 3 p.m.

BIRMINGHAM: Church of the Messiah, Broad Street.
Minister: Rev. L. P. Jacks, M.A.
Services: 11 and 6-30.

BIRMINGHAM: The Hurst Street Mission.
Minister: Rev. W. J. Clarke, 160, Pershore Road.
Services: 10-15, 2-45, and 6-30.

BIRMINGHAM: The Fazeley Street Mission.
Minister: Rev. T. Pipe, 59, Great Brook Street.
Services: 11 and 6-30.

BIRMINGHAM: The Newhall Hill Church.
Minister: Rev. A. A. Charlesworth, Reservoir Road, Edgbaston. Services: 11 and 6-30.

BIRMINGHAM: The Old Meeting Church.
Minister: Rev. Joseph Wood, 120, Gough Road, Edgbaston. Services: 11 and 6-30.

BIRMINGHAM: The Church of the Saviour.
Minister: Rev. J. C. Street, Bristol Road, Edgbaston. Services: 1 and 6-30.

BIRMINGHAM: Small Heath, Little Green Lane Board School.
Minister: Rev. Edward J. Sale, 70, Whitmore Road, Small Heath. Service at 6-30 p.m.

BANBURY: Christchurch Chapel, Horse Fair.
Minister: Rev. H. Hill, 5, Crouch Street. Service: Evening, 6-30.

COSELEY: The Old Meeting House.
Minister: Rev. Henry Eachus. Services: 11 and 6-30.

CRADLEY: Netherend Chapel.
Minister: Rev. E. P. Hall. Services 11 and 6-30.

DUDLEY: The Old Meeting House.
Minister: Rev. A. H. Shelley. Services: 11 and 6-30.

EVESHAM: Oat Street Meeting House.
Minister: Rev. Rudolf Davis. Services: 11 and 6-30.

KIDDERMINSTER:
Minister: Rev. E. D. Priestley Evans. Services: 10-30 and 6-30.

KINGSWOOD: Kingswood Chapel, Hollywood.
Minister: Rev. J. Hardinge Matthews. Services: 11 and 6-30.

LOUGHBOROUGH: Unitarian Chapel.
Minister: Rev. H. Haycock, Beacon Road. Services: 10-45 and 6-30.

OLDBURY: Unitarian Meeting House.
Minister: Rev. Henry McKean, The Dingle, Oldbury. Services: 11 and 6-30.

SHREWSBURY: High Street Church.
Minister: Rev. E. Myers, F.G.S., Claremont Hill. Services: 11 and 6-30.

STOURBRIDGE: Presbyterian Chapel.
Minister: Rev. A. W. Timmis. Services: 11 and 6-30.

TAMWORTH: Cole Hill Chapel.
Minister: Rev. J. Howard, 17, Aldergate. Services: 11 and 6-30.

THE LYE: Unitarian Chapel.
Minister: Rev. I. Wrigley, B.A. Service: 6-30.

WALSALL. Unitarian Free Church.
Minister: Rev. Peter Dean, 3, Sandwell Street. Services: 11-15 and 6-30.

WEST BROMWICH: Lodge Road Chapel.
Minister: Rev. John Harrison Jesson Street. Services: 11 and 6-30.

WHITCHURCH: Church of the Saviour.
Minister: Rev. George Eyre Evans, Doddington Parsonage. Services: 11, 2-15 for Children, 6-30.

WOLVERHAMPTON: Unity Church, Snow Hill.
Minister: Rev. L. G. Harris Crook, Oaklands Road. Services: 11 and 6-30.